



THE GARRETT GAZETTE

Congressman Garrett's Newsletter on Issues of Interest to New Jersey's 5th Congressional District

Dear Friend:

Thank you for signing up to receive my newsletter that includes updates on the work I am doing while representing the people of the 5th Congressional district. Your interest in and comments on the issues that Congress is debating are important to me as I weigh the merits of the legislation that comes before me. Thank you for your thoughts and interest in the legislative process. Please continue to contact myself or my staff to let your voice be heard. Please enjoy this edition.

Defending the Homeland, Congress' First Priority

Recently, I became a member of the first Congress to pass a Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Conference Report. This legislation will provide \$29.4 billion to uphold Congress' basic duty to protect the American people against future attacks, including a 1.8 percent increase for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to go into effect once the report is signed by President Bush.

Ensuring the safety and security of every American is our top priority. Northern New Jersey is recognized for its risks, needs and challenges. Its unique proximity makes it still vulnerable to terrorist attacks. By passing this legislation, we are meeting our local priorities and working to put in place the most effective measures we can to safeguard our neighborhoods and communities from the dangers and threats of terrorism.

The bill provides \$4.2 billion for the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP), firefighters and emergency management; this is \$541 million above the amounts proposed by the President. Since September 11th, 2001, and including grants funded outside the jurisdiction of the Homeland Security Subcommittee, this brings total support of first responders to \$20.5 billion.

The bill provides \$9 billion for border protection and related activities, an increase of \$400 million over fiscal year 2003 enacted levels (excluding Liberty Shield Coast Guard port security operations). This includes \$2 billion for U.S. Coast Guard homeland security activities.

The bill includes \$5.2 billion for TSA and the Federal Air Marshal Program, \$405 million above the amounts requested by the President (including port security grants), providing funding for both aviation and non-aviation security.

Giving the Men and Women in Uniform the Resources to Protect and Defend Liberty Worldwide

On September 24th, I was honored to vote for the Fiscal Year 2004 Department of Defense Appropriations Conference Report. This legislation will provide \$368.2 billion in spending authority for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2003.

There are heroic and selfless American men and women in uniform risking their lives so that every American citizen can be free and so the world will be rid of evil. It is our duty to ensure that they have the means to complete their tasks successfully and safely.

This legislation will provide:

- \$4.5 billion for the Special Operations Command, an increase of \$97 million over the budget request and an overall increase of over 47 percent from levels approved in the fiscal year 2003 Defense Appropriations Act.
- The Committee provides over \$1 billion, an increase of \$135 million over the request, for procurement and development of chemical and biological defenses under the Defense-Wide appropriations, with additional funding for mobile chemical agent detection, air contaminant monitoring systems, early warning and detection programs, and miniature chemical and biological detectors.
- Fully funds an average 4.1 percent military personnel pay raise requested in the budget and selected targeted pay raises for mid-career officers and senior non-commissioned officers.
- Provides \$128 million for the continuation of increased rates for Imminent Danger Pay and Family Separation Allowances.

Consumers in Debt can Expect Greater Protection Under Legislation I Recently Introduced

In response for the need of long overdue clarifications to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA), I recently introduced legislation that would enhance the clarity and effectiveness of this law for both consumers and the collection industry.

Originally enacted in 1977 with the support of the industry, the FDCPA is the primary federal law governing the practices of third party debt collectors, deterring abusive collection practices and ensuring that consumers know their rights. While still vitally important, various provisions of this decades old law are in need of clarification and technical correction as evidenced by inconsistent court rulings and contradictory interpretation of certain provisions over the past several years. Legislative clarification is especially important to the small businesses which dominate the collection industry, and to the diverse workforce employed by those small businesses.

In the News

I recently received the 2003 Conservation Legislator Award by the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts and the State Soil Conservation Committee. During my 13 years of public service, I have fought to save open space and preserve New Jersey's pristine landscape. It is an honor to be recognized for a cause that I feel is a responsibility of all Americans.

One of the many areas of environmental protection I have been working on is the Highlands Stewardship Act, which I am an original cosponsor of. This legislation will promote conservation of critical natural resources and land in the New York/New Jersey Highlands by authorizing \$250 million over ten years for land conservation partnership projects and \$2 million a year over the same time span for technical assistance to private landowners and local communities.

Facts of the Week

It looks as though we are seeing clear-cut and encouraging news that our sluggish economy is finally on the way back to prosperity. I was proud to help pass a historic economic development package introduced by President George Bush and guided through Congress by House Ways and Means Chairman, Bill Thomas.

Examples of recent promising economic data include:

- Non-farm payroll employment grew by 57,000 in September, the first gain since January.
- The value of U.S. stock markets has increased \$2 trillion since the beginning of this year.
- Disposable personal income is up 3.8 percent at an annual rate in 2003.
- GDP growth was 3.3 percent in the second quarter of 2003.
- The U.S. homeownership rate was 68% in the second quarter.
- Productivity growth remains strong, which has bolstered corporate profits.
- Orders of manufacturing goods have been increasing since earlier this year.
- Shipments of durable goods increased this summer after a period of decline and stagnation. Orders have been above shipments since early 2003, suggesting future strengthening.

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